

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs History Project

AMBASSADOR HERBERT DONALD GELBER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: Interview was not completed. Mr. Gelber also served as Political Advisor, Washington, DC, 1971-1973; Political Advisor to Commander in Chief Europe United States Navy, London, England, 1973-1976; Legislative Management Officer Bureau of Congressional Relations, Washington, DC, 1976-1978; Counselor for Political and Military Affairs, Ankara, Turkey, 1978-1980; Deputy Chief of Mission, Lagos, Nigeria, 1983-1986; Special Assistant for International Affairs NATO, Ankara, Turkey, 1986-1990 and U.S. Ambassador to Mali, 1990-1993.]

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Gelber.]

Q: Today is June 2, 1995. This is an interview with Ambassador Herbert Donald Gelber, known as Don. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. You were born in New York?

GELBER: In Brooklyn.

Q: In 1932.

GELBER: That's right. East New York, July 20th.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about your family background?

GELBER: My mother was born also in Brooklyn in East New York. She was born in 1906. We attended the same grammar school. My father was born in Hungary, that portion of which is now in the Ukraine, having at one point been Czechoslovakia, having been Romania, having been Soviet. It's that tip of Czechoslovakia which might be called Ruffinia. We were not Ruffinians. The town was Dibronic, which is the Ungra in Hungarian and Uzgarod in Russian or Ukrainian.

Dad was raised in Poughkeepsie, having entered the United States at the age of three, in a tiny house in the shadow of the Hudson River Bridge. It is now a protected building as being one of the rare surviving examples of the box houses that were so typical for the newly arriving immigrant population. Dad moved down to New York City after the First World War. He and my mother met. They were the children of neighbors. They were married and I was born in '32.

Q: What business was your father in?

GELBER: My father worked for the Erie Railroad. He retired from the railroad after 50 years of service. At the end of his career he was a yardmaster and would commute to Jersey every day in order to work. Mom wouldn't leave Brooklyn. I went to PS76, which as I say had many of the teachers that had educated my mother, and then went to Thomas Jefferson High School, a high school that I boast is the only public high school in the United States ever to graduate two U.S. ambassadors in a single senior class – Hank Cohen and myself. From Jefferson in 1949 I went off to CCNY [City College of New York], first to study accounting, but that lasted six months and then I transferred to the history department and I pursued that for the rest of my life.

Q: Why history?

GELBER: I always liked to read history, and reading history seemed to me like a useful thing to do. I wanted to know where and who and why and what. I worked while at City as a photo engraver, would leave school at about two, three, or four o'clock, and then put in six to eight hours in a photo engraving shop, earning a damned good salary.

Q: Was it union?

GELBER: Yes. The plant was a union plant. I was a clerk. After doing this for many years (because I did it not only as an undergraduate but also as a graduate student), as a graduate student during the summer holidays, I began as a messenger and finished my

photo engraving career as a shop superintendent working the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift. When I took my appointment to the Foreign Service, my brother was outraged that I gave up a \$100-a-week job to take this State Department job. I think I was hired at \$47.50. He couldn't understand why I would do something like that.

In my final years at City, I was a member of the faculty.

An aside: I started as a reader and became a junior instructor. Someone entered my office and flashed impressive looking credentials, said he was with the State Department, and wanted to ask me about one of my students who was applying to join the Foreign Service, and would I talk to him? I said, "Yes, certainly, but first you have to talk to me about the Foreign Service. What is the Foreign Service?" He described it and I liked what I heard. I said, "How does one apply?" He gave me the address of the Board of Examiners and I then discussed my student, who was accepted but didn't survive. He decided that New York was where he wanted to be and the idea of going off to the Philippines didn't impress him, so he resigned his commission. But I persevered and I took the exam in October of '56 and was called in in August of '57. As a young man at that time, I of course was eligible for Selective Service. I had enlisted in the Navy for a commission, but because of my deficient eyesight I was offered a restricted commission, which I accepted. But only about a month before I was to get my degree and go off to the Navy, they abolished or eliminated restricted commissions, so I was there at sixes and sevens, not sure what I was going to do now that I was coming to get a degree. I had extended my undergraduate time to five years, but I didn't know what to do. I saw a sign on the wall: Oral History Contest. So, I decided I didn't want to go to work that day, called up my boss and said, "I've got to take this exam." He said, "No problem." I took this exam on oral history and I won a fellowship to Columbia University for two years and my first appointment to CCNY as a reader and later junior history teacher. I mention all of this CCNY teaching because many years later, at an Atlantic Treaty Association meeting, I was facing a U.S. general who was the commander of V CORPS. I looked at his hands and he had no ring. I asked, "General, where did you go to school?" Clearly it wasn't West Point. He said he went to CCNY. I said, "Oh, when were you there?" He said, "1954 to 1958." Well, I was teaching there from '54 to '57. I said, "General, I may have been your history teacher." He said, "Well, I don't know. I wasn't really interested in history. I was interested in ROTC because that was going to get me out of the ghetto. I majored in geology." I said, "Well, who knows?" Of course, the general was Colin Powell. Quite frankly, the possibility of his having been my student was probably less than that of nuclear war, but it was an interesting evening. A few weeks later, he was named to the White House. I called up Hank Cohen and said, "Hank, I had lunch with the new NSC guy and he remembers City with great affection. He was in the Pershing Rifles. Were you Pershing Rifles," Hank having been in ROTC. He says, "No, I was Scabbard and Blade." I said, "Well, if that'll do, give him a ring." Of course, Hank went and worked for him. He was his African expert. I went to Columbia from '54 to '57, but in the summers I would go back and work in the photo engraving in order to cover the rest of my academic expenses.

Q: At Columbia you were what?

GELBER: I was a candidate for the master's degree. I got my master's degree in '56. I was a doctoral candidate, but I never proceeded with that because my mentor decided that he had a better offer first from California and then from Harvard. He is now a professor of history and economics, probably retired, at Harvard.

Q: While you were getting your master's, were you concentrating on any particular area?

GELBER: I was an economic historian. My teacher was David Landes, who is the dean of American economic historians, who has written extensively. I didn't see him for many years. I went to a conference in Luxembourg in December of 1988 cohosted by the grand duke and Harvard University. Galbraith was the Harvard senior rep. But I began talking to several of the other Harvard professors and asked if they knew Landes, and they did. I said, "Will you pass him a message that I'm living in Belgium and am assigned there? Perhaps we can get together. I'd like his address." They gave me an address and I wrote. He was on leave in Paris and he and his wife drove up. Over the years I had bought all the books he had written and I had them out there, to show that I was still a diligent student. He took the occasion to undo his pen and inscribe words in all of them. I said, "David, the next time you want to write in my books, bring a courtesy copy."

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam when?

GELBER: I think it was in the fall of '56. The oral was shortly thereafter.

Q: Do you have any recollections of what they might have asked you on the oral?

GELBER: Oh, yes. Economic history. One of the questions was, "Why in England does the speaker sit on a sack of wool in Parliament?" We talked about the role of wool in England's economic development. I had been trained... I won a \$5,000 oral history prize in 1954 by letting others dominate the interviews – but I will not apply any of this to you. I had a fairly good feeling about the oral exam. We talked about subjects that I was most familiar with and I didn't venture any thoughts about subjects in which I knew nothing. At the end, they told me then and there that I had been accepted. I went outside and waited and then came back. They said, "We do have a problem. You're a New Yorker. You've had some interesting fun. But as a young vice consul, you're not going to be an academic. You may have to handle drunks and criminals and all of that." I recalled to them my photo engraving experience and said that I had been rolling drunks for a long time in the advertising world and this did not pose any threat. So they said, "Well, fine." They asked me about my military obligation. When I was released from my commitment to join the Navy, I explored other ways to meet my military obligation. I said, "Well, I've been offered a commission in the Medical Corps." They said, "But you're not a doctor." I said, "No, but the Air Force Medical Corps will give a commission to anyone who has an advanced degree, and I have that, and at least two years teaching experience, and I have that." One of the examiners said, "But that's four years." I said, "Yes, but four years as an officer sure as hell beats two years as an enlisted man." He said, "Don't be hasty. Maybe

we can do something about this.” That was my first insight that the Foreign Service was not a bunch of straight-laced people, that they had a flexibility and a reasonableness about them. In fact, when I joined the Service, I got a call – I was at work – it was August – that said there was a place in the August class that would assemble on the 27th, which was Monday, and we’re talking now it is Thursday. Could I join? I said, “Yes” unhesitatingly; I had no other commitment that I had to worry about, and went off on a Sunday and got to the Department on the 27th of August. At that time, you had to write your draft board, notifying them that you had changed your address. I did, but I invoked all the deities. I told them that pursuant to orders issued under the authority of the Secretary of State, I had removed my residence to – and I gave an address in Arlington – in order that I might accept a commission in the Foreign Service of the United States and that I currently had a Reserve commission, but when the President receives the advice and consent of the Senate, I would be commissioned as an vice consul of career and officer in the Foreign Service Class 8 and a secretary in the diplomatic service. When this landed on the desk of the local draft board, they called up my mother and their first reaction was, “Catherine, why did Donny join the Foreign Legion?” “No, no, no, it’s not the Foreign Legion. It’s something else.” “What is it?” She said, “All I know is what his brother told me. His brother said John Foster Dulles called and invited him to Washington, so he went.” So they wrote me a letter saying, “Could you have the Department confirm your letter of the 13th?” I took that to Personnel, a Mrs. Emmerson, who was on 18th and H [Streets], where Personnel was located. I showed her the letter that asked for confirmation. Then I showed her the letter that had provoked the request. She laughed and said, “We’ll take care of it.” Subsequently I got a copy of her letter to the draft board saying, “This is to inform you that on the 27th of September 1957, the President did with the advice and consent of the Senate commission Herbert Donald Gelber an officer in the Foreign Service of the United States.” The board got in touch with me and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “Right now I’m in training at the Foreign Service Institute.” “Training? No problem. That’s a student deferment.” They gave me a student deferment. Then in March I was assigned to Athens and had to get an exit permit from the draft board. I wrote the draft board telling them why I wanted to leave the United States and what my address would be. They called me and said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “It’s a training assignment.” “Training assignment? We’ll just continue your student deferment.” When I was in Athens later on, after a year, they wrote to ask if I still was employed by the embassy. I had the personnel officer confirm my status. Then after the two-year assignment, I came home and I found next to the bread box in the kitchen of my mother’s apartment a missive from the draft board reclassifying me 1A. Well, I was by that time 28. They weren’t drafting people over 26. I grabbed the card in near panic and rushed to the draft board and said, “This?” She said, “Oh, yes, we heard you were coming home. We knew of no better way to get you to drop by. What are you going to do now?” I said, “I’ve been reassigned to the Foreign Service Institute for language training.” “No problem. We’ll just go on with your student deferment.” So I had a student deferment until I was 35. I once said to a military audience at Fort Leavenworth that this record of draft that can only be defined as draft evasion should qualify me for the highest offices in the United States. But I preferred a bureaucratic career, which offers a surer pension than the rough and tumble of elective politics.

Q: Could you describe a little your Foreign Service class and people in it and training? This was '57.

GELBER: This was the class of '57. Some made ambassador – Bill Luers, Dave Korn, Peter Bridges, myself. Some dropped out quickly. One has done extremely well as a writer and historian and has a new book out. We were the first two to be assigned out. I went to Athens, he went to Cyprus. After about six months in Cyprus, he resigned his commission and went into academic work and has had a very, very, very successful academic career. A recent book of his has been reasonably favorably reviewed in the Times on the whole Cold War period in our diplomacy. I was the last of those who had been in continuous service to retire. Phyllis Oakley is on active service, but she had had to resign her commission when she married Bob Oakley. At that point in time, she was Phyllis Elliott. The group did not remain together terribly much – or maybe I didn't remain together with them terribly much. I was one of the first out the door and went to Athens in March of '58. Most of them came from small towns in the Midwest. I remember, we had to get up and say things and there was a rivalry – who came from the smallest town? 25, 50? But they had all done their military service and had been to many places around the world, either as students or in uniform. When it came my turn, I said, "There is some debate as to the size of my town. The government says 7. The mayor said 8. This dispute is in the public print." Somebody said, "But Gelber, you're from New York." I said, "Yes. The government says we've only got 7 million. The mayor says we've got 8 million. We're not quite sure. But it's important for direct grants from the federal government, the size of your population." But there were these people from small towns in the Midwest – Cleveland was the closest east, apart from myself – who had been world travelers. But I hadn't been out of New York City but for maybe a total of seven or eight weeks. I was just 25 when I joined the Service. I was one of the youngest in the class. They were all world travelers. I was somewhat of a provincial by comparison to them. But again, they were from the state colleges rather than the eastern universities.

Q: Your first post was Athens. You were there from when to when?

GELBER: I was there from March of '58 to May of '60 with a 3-month TDY [temporary duty] in Turkey.

Q: Was this just an assignment or had you asked for it?

GELBER: No, they called me in and said, "You're going to Athens. How do you want to go?" I said, "I'd love to sail." They said, "You're flying." I said, "Can't we compromise? What about flying to Paris and sailing from Venice?" They said, "No, you're flying." "Well, can't I sail across the Atlantic and fly from Paris?" They said, "Gelber, you've been selected for this posting because you can get there before anyone else." I said, "Oh, I thought I was picked because I had a minor in Greek." They said, "Oh, you do? We didn't know that?"

The reason why I was so available is that at the conclusion of my A100 and the lifting of my French probationary status, I was assigned to language training at Yale, in Korean. I

was interviewed by Henderson, who was the guru of the Korean language officers, the expert in Korean pottery and culture. He said, "Yes, this is a great idea." My uncle, who was a Yale man, was pleased. Finally he was going to get me into Yale. I told my colleagues, "We've got to break up the apartment. I've been assigned out." But a week before I was ready to go, the Department called me and said, "This isn't a very good idea. You've just concluded eight years of college and university training. We'd like to see a little more of you before we send you back to university and let you see a little more of the service," which made good sense to me. So, I was available and could get anyplace as a bachelor before anyone else. I got Greece as a visa officer, immigrant visas. There was a Refugee Relief Act that had made hundreds of Greek applicants immediately eligible for final action. So, I was assigned to the consulate to issue immigrant visas. It was assumed that it would take two years. I finished the job in six months. So, I became a kind of rotating officer. I spent a little time issuing non-immigrant visas, which was always great fun. Then I was assigned to the chancery as staff aide to the ambassador.

Q: Before we move to that, let's talk about the consular side. What was your impression of the Greek refugees that were going in under the Refugee Relief Act?

GELBER: The group that I had were those who had been rejected on security grounds. My sense is that these were primarily the victims of considerable injustice, that rumor and allegation unsubstantiated was entered into the files and acted upon to prevent individuals from going to the States. In one case, however, the man was an officer in the communist-supported guerrilla movement. I said, "Why did you join ELAS [Greek People's Liberation Army]?" He flipped a sovereign across the table at me, which I grabbed and looked at. He said, "Then you paid me for it and now you question me about it?" I said, "You made your point." Much of the evidence against these individuals was rather flimsy. Some of it was based upon family feuds and jealousies. Some of these people may have had notions and views and attitudes which made them suspect at the time but which to me... I think we had to take a hard look at this. I was encouraged to do that.

Q: I've dealt with refugee programs. Sometimes you have people who were involved with these at almost a supervisory level who take a harder than necessary line on things and they have no feel for the pressures on people in a war-torn country. Did you find this?

GELBER: No. My bosses were extraordinary individuals – Joe Costanza and Elizabeth Rice. Wonderful people with a fine sense of humanity both. We can get back to Joe. The law had to be applied as the law was crafted, but the law also provided that people have fair treatment and that they not be denied their due without the evidence being in some ways credible.

The lesson about the flimsiness of some of this evidence [is shown in] two cases. One, a young American of considerable wealth married one of Greece's most beautiful young ladies and applied for a visa. He produced letters from Senator Murphy from California endorsing the fact that at 21 he had an income of \$250,000 and at 31 he would gain control of the balance of his estate and that he could well support a wife. Fine. Processed

the case for final action. At those times, you couldn't get a Greek passport valid for travel to the United States unless you had a pro forma from the mission saying that if the person is in possession of a valid passport, the embassy is prepared to proceed to final action on their visa application. So, the application pro forma was issued. Suddenly I got a call from Greek security saying, "Mr. Vice Consul, don't you talk to your counterintelligence people?" "What are you suggesting?" "I think in this case you want to talk to them." So I called up Air Force Counterintelligence and said, "What have you got on an individual by the name of Sophie Armstrong?" He said, "Oh, Sofula. Why don't you drop by? I'll show you the file." They produced this enormous record. Sophie alleged that she had worked her wiles seducing the code clerk and got into the crypto spaces at the air base and photographed the machines. Did she? No one could be sure. They also found out that her uncle, for whom she had considerable affection, was one of the leaders of the Greek left, which was the cover of the Greek Communist Party, the ETHA, the democratic Greek left, the national leftist party. Not a crime. What are the facts? They said, "Why don't you call her and talk to her?" I called her. I took careful notes and said, "Thank you. You understand this will have to be looked into." Then the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps) people came and said, "What did she tell you? Then they said, no, let me tell you." They produced a script that she had memorized, which was verbatim what she had told me. No crime. In the meantime, we're getting letters from Senator Noland and the husband who wants his beautiful wife by his side, if not in the daytime, at least at night. A beautiful girl. Can't get any firm handle. Is she ineligible? Then: maybe she's mentally imbalanced and has this kind of Mata Hari complex. We brought the psychiatrist down from Germany to meet with her. She seduced him. He resigned his commission. He went bananas. I never found out what happened to Sophie. But I always found consular work fascinating.

The other case was also an example. My Greek secretary came in all agitated and said, "I asked her if she's ever been arrested and she looked at me and said, 'I don't remember.' How could she not remember?" "Why don't you invite her in?" This is the wife of an American citizen who was asked, "Have you ever been arrested?" When this started, I called up to the security people and said, "Look, I've got a clean police record here. We asked the applicant if she'd ever been arrested and she said she doesn't remember. What the hell is going on?" They said, "We'll send somebody to check it out." I called her in and put her under oath and asked her, went down through all the questions on the immigrant visa form and got to the key question, "Have you ever been picked up by the police?" I was doing this in Greek. I could do visa interviews in Greek with someone listening to be sure that I didn't get it wrong. "I don't remember." I said, "Well, Madam, sit outside on the bench. Refresh your recollection." I waited for the call to come. They said, "Gelber, the British landed in Athens on the 18th of September 1944. She was arrested that night, charged with soliciting, sent to the center for venereal diseases, found free of disease, and released." So, she was arrested in the month of September about six times and finally found to have a venereal infection and held for treatment. Then before the end of the year, 1944, numerous arrests, again the same charges. And then he skipped over to 1959. About two weeks before she was married, she was arrested for soliciting. We brought her in and asked her, "What's all this?" She said, "I was making a crowd." The Greek word for being with one's friends was *mazimetmetinparaya* – "together with

those that you're with." The problem is that in English that word has a different connotation. I said, "Okay, Madam, there is sufficient ground here ineligibility due to you having been arrested for moral turpitude and prostitution." Her husband asked me what the problem was with the visa. I said, "I'm not allowed to discuss this with you without the written permission of your wife. All I can tell you is the sections of law under which the finding of ineligibility was found." He looked at me and said, "Where do you think I met her?" I said, "Oh?" He said, "I'm no spring chicken. How do you think we got together?" I said, "Well, what do you want to do?" He said, "Well, she's my wife." I said, "Well, you can go down the hall to the immigration authorities and ask for a waiver of these grounds of inadmissibility." He went down to the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] with his wife, and the INS called me up and said, "Gelber, I can't do anything for him." I said, "Why?" "She doesn't say that she ever has been arrested. She still doesn't remember. She's got to make a full disclosure of all events in order for me to waive them all." That was sort of hanging between. I said to the guy, "You okay? People here, you know..." He said, "Oh, yeah, I was with the station." The guy had been a CIA type. Those were two cases where the documentation we had was not all that reliable and caused questions about some of the other documentation that we had.

We had a file... There were 2,000 of these hardcore cases – after processing about 50,000 immigrant visas in a matter of about 5,000 a month, we set them up in kind of an assembly line in order to get them out. Washington thought that would take two years, but we got them out rather rapidly. Then I went over to the chancery and was a staff aide to the ambassador.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GELBER: James Riddleberger. When he left, the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was Sam Berger. Sam said, "Look, no ambassador. I think you ought to go into property for a while." So I went into property. Then they said, "Gelber, we're going to send you to Istanbul TDY. The vice consul in Istanbul, his wife has taken mortally ill. You go finish out his tour until his replacement arrives." So I was sent to Istanbul. When I came back from Istanbul, which was November of '59, I did a brief stint in the political section and then was sent to the consular section to work on these 2,000 cases of people who were persisting in their application, who were now the spouses of American citizens who had been found inadmissible on security grounds, and we tried to adjudicate those with fairness and issue as many of those visas as we could. Each one required the Department to overrule the earlier finding of inadmissibility. They did provide if you wrote a good enough brief. So we got most of that file cleared up.

The Greek applicants were interesting. I tried to do my interviews in Greek. Of course, I had learned the FSI [Foreign Service Institute] style of Greek. I referred to everybody in the second person plural. So, a little boy, when asked what will he do when he goes to the United States, in the polite form would reply in the first-person plural: "We will work." But these were diligent people. Their sponsors who had gone over under the Refugee Relief Act had worked very hard, put money aside in order to be able to bring wife and children to join them in the United States. The act that I was dealing with was a special

act that said that anyone who had come to the United States under the Refugee Relief Act and his wife and children who had applied to follow by a certain date, they would now be conceded immediately as non-quota immigrants and be immediately eligible to go to the United States. This wasn't the Refugee Relief Act. This was the follow-up. It was an adjunct to the Refugee Relief Act, and it was an effort by the Congress to rejoin these families. Because with a Greek quota of 380 a year, 50,000 would have taken... Either that or they all would have to become citizens. So they were brought in. When I was at FSI studying Hindustani, I would drive up to New York fairly frequently. We'd always stop off in a Greek diner and I always knew somebody there. But these were good people, hardworking people. There was never a sense that any of them would become a public charge. They had lived very abstemiously and had put aside the monies necessary to now bring their children and wife to join them. This was good. It was a good feeling. I had very positive feelings about my visa experience, about my consular experience. When I was in Pakistan, I was the backup consular officer. There's a story there, too.

Q: We'll come to that.

You were in Greece from '58 to '60. What was the political situation that you were seeing as a young embassy officer?

GELBER: This was the early years of Karamanlis' tenure. He had just replaced Papagos. There was an election. His opponents in the election were Venizelos and George Papandreou. I once had drinks with Andreas, who was on leave from his duties as a professor at the University of California who was an advisor to the Greek government. His father had just broken with Venizelos for the third time, and I asked Andreas about that. His reply was, "Papa now leads a party of one and they're still not the most united in the league." But the thought was that there was a fundamental polarization in Greek politics. There were the royalists, who might be of liberal or right-wing persuasion. And there were the republicans, who could also span the political gamut. But there was no crossing the line. The royalists could not vote for a republican or vice versa. The royalists had a little over 50 percent of the vote, and that gave a stable majority to Karamanlis. They had a secure majority.

There was still evidence of the civil war. The buildings in Athens were pockmarked from gunfire, some of it from September 1944. In the countryside there would be block houses protecting the key routes, key points, near the Corinth Canal. But they were unoccupied. There was no sense of military insecurity. The war was over. You had a good, clear feeling that the war was over. You could travel in Greece, you could walk anyplace in Athens at any time of day or night with a sense of security. There was no fear of urban violence. Even in Piraeus, there were certain areas one stayed out of. But it was a seaport. But you could walk in Plaka. Used to visit the Parthenon on evenings of the full moon. It was open and you could go up there. They would begin illuminating. My favorite pastime was taking time exposures of the Parthenon and then closing the lens and putting someone there with this over his or her shoulder and then taking a flash shot of the individual so that they would have a picture of themselves with the Parthenon at night illuminated.

But the political situation was essentially... It was a friendly, stable government. The issue that dominated the ambassador's concern was Cyprus. Riddleberger was one of the keys to the London-Zurich Accords. I was away during the critical period. I was off in Istanbul, but I was not terribly intensely involved in the political issues. I was a consular officer and a protocol officer. Protocol was very difficult in Athens, because you had the foreign ministry, which had its own notion of the way things should be run, and the palace, which had its views. Ne'er the twain did meet. We had a royal command performance of the American Ballet Theater. We decided the good thing to do was to invite the king and queen to open the weeklong program and invite the diplomatic corps and the government. Of course, then everybody had to be seated according to protocolary rank. This created some consternation, because there were two rows of seats that no one could see from. Why was the minister of coordination, who was the ranking minister, in the third row? Who was in front of him? So we had to dress up the theater to indicate that the first two rows didn't count. Fergo was chargé, very meticulous and very careful about details. At a certain point in these proceedings, a good friend of his, Professor Sydney Hook of New York University, was returning from a year's sabbatical in India via Athens and called on the chargé, who said, "Gelber, get him two tickets." I said, "It's black tie." "I haven't got a dark tie." Professor Hook said, "Oh, we're sorry." Fine. "Take care of them" were my instructions. They arrived at the opera house, he in a raglan sleeved tweed topcoat. Of course, the Greeks looked on him with disdain as having been totally out of dress. Noses turned up. But Americans who knew of him and knew him gathered around him, and during the first intermission I was told that His Majesty had heard that Professor Hook was in the audience and wanted the Professor and Mrs. Hook to join them in the royal box. Vengeance Was Mine was a novel then in vogue. So, from an appropriate distance – I didn't have a black rod to pound on the pavement – in a high voice, I did say, "Professor Hook!" People turned. "His Majesty commands your presence and that of Mrs. Hook in the royal box." People looked up again at this funny tie and this dark suit but obviously not evening clothes. He walked up the steps. "Oh, yeah, Paul. I know him well" was his attitude. So, he headed toward the staircase and people who didn't hear my message looked somewhat askance at this individual who was plodding his way through up the staircase and to the royal box. It was a delicious moment.

There were other incidents as protocol officer, but it was superb training, the kind of training our young officers didn't get and don't get again. I learned the manual. In fact, most recently I was in a court as a juror, an alternate, and being released as the jury went in to deliberate, the judge turned to me and said, "Mr. Ambassador, what do you think of our court?" I said, "Your Honor, your flag is incorrectly displayed. The national banner should be behind your right shoulder as you face the court. It's behind your left." She said, "What's the reason for that?" I said, "Madam, there's not a reason. It is a rule." But I also told ACTA (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency) that their flag was displayed incorrectly there. These are small things. But these were parts of your craft. A U.S. embassy should not improperly display the American flag. The embassy should not improperly produce correspondence that doesn't meet the standards of the trade. Very often your willingness to pay attention to these matters, small though they be, is an

indication to your recipient of your professionalism. I remember the third Afghan war was caused because the Afghans addressed a communication to the viceroy as *Djnab*, not *Djenabiali*, clearly a deliberate insult. You just pay attention to these things. Sam Berger, the DCM and my boss as staff aide, insisted that I learn the protocol calendar of the year. What were the events? The Te Deums and the church ceremonies for the Epiphany, etc. What's the proper attire and who goes and who doesn't go? How do we do... The embassy respected these rules. One night at the Marine Ball, young officers came to me and said, "We've got a babysitter. How long is he going to stay?" The rule was, "No one left until the ambassador left." "Gelber, have a heart." I said, "Give me a minute." I went up and I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you don't have to stay any longer than you want to." He said, "I'm having..." His wife said, "Jimmy, we have to go." He said, "Oh, yeah, you're right" and he walked by and said, "You can let them go, Gelber, but I'll be back." Coming there was a real game because we had all been at a party, the party that I had mentioned where Papandreou said that his father was now the head of a party of one and still not the most united in the league. We were all at this party at the home of a colleague, Steven Gebel, and nobody could leave until the ambassador did, but we all had to get to the Marine Ball before the ambassador did. So he left and he piled into his old Cadillac and drove on about three-quarters of a mile, and we all were rushing behind him in cars but you weren't allowed to pass him. But he pulled off the road and the chauffeur turned off the lights and we all whipped down the main thoroughfare, got to where we had to be, parked our cars, and got into the ball, joined the guests at the ball, when the ambassador then made his appearance. He did his part, allowing us to show proper respect on our side. But it was this kind of minuet that later was discarded as not terribly meaningful but which I thought was meaningful.

Q: It was part of the tribal customs that made sense.

GELBER: Well, it was what permitted an organization that saw itself as elite to accept into its ranks newcomers not drawn from the same social class, evaluate them, and say they belong, they have the right to membership, and there never was a question. If you were prepared to observe the rules as defined – you dropped your cards, if you were married, your wife dropped her cards and yours, if you made your initial calls and you did all of these things and you rose when you were supposed to stand and you allowed others to go through the door before you, and you did all these minor things to say, "I know the rules and I intend to observe them. You can trust me. I know what's right and I respect that..." It was a way of strangers communicating to each other that they had a common background. As such, I think it was useful. We got away from that, but it was what permitted the new entrants, the equal opportunity candidates, to in effect say, "I fit in." I think it was useful.

Q: How did you see Ambassador Riddleberger operating as an ambassador? What was his method?

GELBER: My vantage point was one of awe. "I'll drop you off." I lived en route when he went back home. I was between the chancery and the residence. He'd get into the limo and he would sit down behind the driver. I would pause. He said, "Sit down, sit down, sit

down.” He said, “You know, Gelber, when William Jennings Bryan was named Secretary of State by Wilson, he was calling upon members of the Senate prior to his confirmation and he had this young FSO [Foreign Service officer] guiding him about, always insisting that he sit on the right side in the rear of the carriage. Finally Bryan said to the young officer, ‘Young man, why all this motion?’ ‘Well, as the secretary designate, you’re supposed to sit in this side of the carriage.’ Bryan turned to him and said, ‘Don’t worry, boy, no one’s going to mistake you for me. Sit down.’” He had that great sense of humor, and he was a very artful practitioner of the diplomatic art and was accorded considerable credit for the London and Zurich accords. But it was a quiet and less flamboyant time. I don’t remember country team meetings that I attended. He had as his DCM Sam Berger and that in itself was a great tribute. He rescued Sam from snooker in New Zealand, Sam having been sent there by an irate vice president. You know that story full well.

Q: What was the story?

GELBER: Sam was a legendary figure in the embassy in London who knew all the Labourites, having been there as the labor attaché. Then when the Labour Party took over in ’45, he was the only one who knew any of the Labour people. Of course, that rocketed through the community, and it was noted that embassies have to be in touch with everybody and just being in touch with those that are... He was in Japan and when Nixon came to Japan I don’t think he found Sam’s assessment of the Japanese trade union movement sufficiently militant. So Sam was sent off to mend his ways to New Zealand, and it was Riddleberger who brought him to Greece as DCM and then put him on the road to becoming deputy ambassador in Saigon.

I was closer to Sam Berger, always admired and appreciated... He always would introduce me as “my colleague.” I was a colleague. I always would introduce my junior colleagues as “my colleague.” “You’ve met my colleague.” Sam demanded much but he demonstrated his appreciation for things that were done well. He came to Calcutta when I was there, and he had three hours between planes. He was coming in from Saigon and going up to Kathmandu. Ambassador Bunker’s wife was the ambassador, Carol Laise. She was in Kathmandu. That became the R&R place for Saigon warriors. So he had about three hours in Calcutta. I arranged to meet him at the plane and give him a tour of the city. Then he came to our apartment and had tea, he and his wife. Then I got him back to the airport. As he was going up the ladder, my wife said, “Well, Mr. Ambassador, does he pass? This was his final exam, you know. Did he do it well?” Here you had an embassy where the London and Zurich accords were the primary effort. A colleague, Wentworth, in Cyprus had been severely wounded by Niko Sampson, whose name comes up again later. But this was not the sort of thing that I, even as the staff aide to the ambassador, would get engaged in. Once in a while when I was in the consular section, Joe Costanza, the consul general, would call me in and talk to me about what was happening and then would stop and look rather mystified at his own actions and say, “Why am I doing this? Why am I telling you these things?” Then he’d reflect for a minute and say, “You are the next generation of leadership and you must be prepared. It is my duty to prepare this next generation.” You didn’t see much of that after Greece. The Service was changing. There was a sense during my time in Athens and also in Istanbul

that the senior officers felt a responsibility for training the junior officers in not only the substance of the issues but also the mysteries of the career. I am grateful for people like Joe Costanza and Jack Horner, who was the political counselor who pointed me in the right direction.

In Karachi, it wasn't the same. As protocol officer, I had to go on behalf of the chargé, Sam Berger, to the boat that was coming down from Yugoslavia and invite a retired U.S. senator, Robertson of Illinois, to the residence of the chargé for tea. So, I met the boat. I said, "Senator, I'm here on behalf of the chargé." He said, "Oh, Mr. Chargé." I said, "No, I'm not the chargé." He said, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador." I said, "No, the ambassador is out of town. The chargé is in charge." He said, "Oh, Mr. Chargé." I said, "I'm not the chargé. I'm only a secretary of embassy." "Ah, Mr. Secretary." We dropped that when we got to the residence for tea. One time I dropped the ball and Sam said, "Gelber, I told you what I wanted you to do. I didn't ask you to evaluate the orders. You didn't carry them out." It was good discipline. There were some other amusing...

I had one experience with a colleague who came from the Sudan. He was our ambassador in the Sudan. He wanted to have seafood, so we took him to the finest seafood restaurant in Athens. Then I had to pay the bill. I never got paid. I always resented it. When the next ambassador came, the ambassador to Korea, and he wanted to go out and we went out and he said finally, "I think we ought to go," I turned to the waiter in Greek and I said, "Give the gentleman the bill." The ambassador said, "Gee, that was fluent, Gelber. What did you say?" I said, "It's not important." "No, really, I'd like to know what you said." I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, I said he should give you the bill." He said, "Yes, yes, yes, of course." Most of our senior colleagues were very sensitive and not exploitive. But I guess if you're in the Sudan, you lose perspective. Remember Penophlides, in "Diplomatic Diversions"? "Les fins des ambassades"? We were in some ways like that. We went to parties. I would get invited to the ambassadors' [functions] as the odd bachelor to round out the table. I was there for Secretary of Defense McElroy. I would get to take out the senators' daughters who came through. I got to know Nancy Gore. It was very much diplomacy in the traditional style. There would be a time for substantive concerns. My political reporting consisted of writing trip reports for people who weren't interested in writing. They would hand me their notes and I would then propose a trip report based upon their travels, which worked out very well. I vicariously visited many places.

One time I did have a trip of my own. We were asked with the labor attaché, who was a first secretary, to represent the ambassador [in Missolonghi, in the southwestern corner of the mainland, on] the anniversary of the exodus of the guards in the death of Lord Byron.. I said to the ambassador, "Representing you, do we fly flags?" He said, "Yes, sure. The manual says that you can fly the American flag, but you also must fly with it the flag of the senior officer present." So I created our copy of the Foreign Service officers' flag. I took the consulate general's flag and dyed out the Cs. It was a blue flag with 13 stars and a circle. We fitted that to our lead vehicle and off we went. But not until we got out of Athens did we fly the flag. The ambassador was thrilled. We spent the night in Patras in western Peloponnesus. We were asked by the people of Patras why we didn't reopen our

consulate. We said that if Ambassador [George V.] Allen, who had opened his career in Patras, couldn't do it, how could lowly officials like us? My senior colleague, the first secretary, said, "Gelber, if you tell anybody you're a vice consul, I'm going to leave you by the side of the road. Once they know that you're a visa officer, I have no value." To go from Patras to Missolonghi, we had to take the ferry boat across the gulf. Well, we got to the ferry slip and there was a jeep with the brigadier of area command. He had a one-star flag on his jeep and he was placed in line. Then there was the major general commanding the area, the division covering that area. He had a two-star flag, so he was placed in line. Then there was the officer representing the general staff. He had a four-star license plate, a two-star flag, but with the letters of Ama Sigma, the general staff. He had fringes on his flag. Then came the American flag and 13 stars. We must have been representing the admiral of the universe's fleets. They couldn't figure out... We were given first place in all convoys and the place of honor on the ferry boat, which is last on, first off. There were several of these amusing events.

Another event was, at this point early in my career, the time when the United States wanted to deport criminals. Lucky Luciano had been deported. Number Two on the deportation list was a Greek-American whose American status was disputed. It was Big Bill Lias of Wheeling Downs, West Virginia – George Vasiliadis Liakakos. He was accused and suspected of having murdered his brother-in-law and other family members. He alleged that he was an American citizen, a native-born American. We had reason to believe that he actually had been born in Greece and that his entry into the United States at some point was illegal. He claimed to be an American and he wasn't. It was a very involved case. The prelate who signed his baptismal certificate we could prove had not been ordained until three years later. So I was sent down with someone from Justice as the consular officer to validate all documents. [I had to attest that a document was] a true copy or the original of a document held in the archives of such and such in order to demonstrate that Big Bill Lias was actually born in the little town of Gythion in southern Greece and that his name appeared in the register of all males kept for selective service purposes. We were interviewing witnesses. This was a very important insight into the way evidence could be gathered and false evidence produced. Individuals would testify that they remembered the day the ship landed and the little American boy came down, which was what Lias had asserted, that he was born in the States, went home to Greece, came back to the United States. So we had witnesses pro and con. We had a major in Greek security police with us and he would check the tie rods on the vehicles every morning to show that somebody hadn't sawed through the linkages so that we would go flipping over the cliffs. The United States put a lot of energy into this case. At a certain point we found the documents that we needed. The local authorities would not give them to us. They insisted on sending them to Athens. Athens was not interested in giving them to us, observing that, "Look, we sent you a little kid. Now you've got a murderer. We didn't train him. You did. You deal with him." That was not the style at the time. Finally considerable diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on the Greeks, and they gave us the documents. But by that time the Justice Department lawyer had resigned from the Justice Department and gone to work for Big Bill Lias. I don't know what happened to the case.

Q: Any Americans get in trouble while you were there?

GELBER: Not there. In Istanbul I had some consular cases.

Q: Why don't we talk a bit about Istanbul?

GELBER: Let's finish Greece first. Ellis Ormsbee Briggs replaced Riddleberger. He was quite a different type of personality. The first job I had was unpacking his lift van. The inventory was in Portuguese. As the stuff was coming out of it, the Portuguese said, "*Objectivo sportive.*" The Greek who was carrying it looked at me and said, "*Svatis* (bullets)." He had 50 cases of bullets. Finally one of the Greeks said to me, "This ambassador who's coming, it's a friendly mission?" He was a great hunter. He had written the book Shots Heard Round the World. He intended to pursue his bird hunting in his new post. Briggs would go out on Sunday – he would drive his own car – and I would go out with him in the second car. I was sort of the tour guide cum interpreter. If he were listening, I would earn my keep by putting together these enormously complicated and ornately phrased questions, "Kind sir, would you have the goodness to point for me the direction one would pursue if one wanted to go to Corinth?" He would point the left fork in the road. But if the ambassador wasn't listening, I would say to the person, "Corinth" and he would point to the left fork. Years later I arrived by ferry in Ioannina and I wanted to make a phone call to our colleague in Thessaloniki to arrange a hotel for us. I said to some Greek citizen, "Kind sir, perhaps you would have the goodness to point me in the direction of the phone company where I could place a call." He looked at me and then he looked at my daughter and said to her in English, "Is this your father?" She said, "Yes." He said, "He's funny." But Briggs, we would go out on these trips and we all would go along with him. He liked martinis, shaken not stirred. He would put away a goodly number and then drive back.

He had with him his executive assistant. I called her the Dragon Lady. She broke more than one officer's career. It was an interesting thing to observe the power of the trusted subordinate. At FSI, they teach you in the DCM course: If you think you're the second most powerful person in the embassy after the ambassador, think again. It's the ambassador's secretary. Ella was the personification of that very sound admonition. The political counselor who crossed her found out that he couldn't get a job afterwards.

Istanbul.

Q: You were in Istanbul from when to when?

GELBER: Three months, the end of July '59 to the end of October '59.

Q: What was your impression? Here was a different post in sort of the same area.

GELBER: It was during the height of the Cyprus issue. While Cyprus was something very serious in Athens, in Istanbul it was very often treated with levity. It was the subject for comic routines in the [Turkish] casinos. The Greeks were not taking that seriously. There was a totally different perspective on the relationship being in Istanbul than being

in Cyprus. [With] the Greeks, one had no qualms or concerns, but in Turkey one had a sense that maybe one had to be a little more prudent about where one ventured. It was also in Turkey that I met my wife.

Q: You keep talking about the Cyprus crises. What was the Cyprus crisis at this time?

GELBER: At this time it was the question of the future of Cyprus. Cyprus was being held by the British, was still under British control. Grivas and others were trying to push the British out and to ensure that Cyprus went to Greece, that there would be *enosis*, union with Greece. I spoke a little earlier about the political balance in Greek politics between royalists and republicans. The political map of Greece at that time indicated that if you came to Greece in 1832 with the original independence, you were likely to be royalist. The 1887, less royalist, more republican; 1912, heavily republican. Crete was heavily republican. And so the concern was that Cyprus as a voting part of the Greek union would upset the internal political balance, and so there were some reservations as to whether or not Cyprus should come into Greece. Grivas on the other hand was a noted royalist. His organization, HE, is the Cross.

Q: This is the EOKA [National Organization of Cypriot Struggle], isn't it?

GELBER: Yes, but during the war his guerrilla organization, HE, was royalist, HE being the two letters of George II crossed, forming the X. So there were some feelings in Greece, but certainly Turkey was on the other side, and Turkey was the entity that had to be accounted. To the Greeks, 500 years' domination by an "inferior" culture weighed heavily upon them. Couldn't quite agree to that characterization, but many in the embassy did. Sam Berger was very Helenophile. I was Turkophile and still am.

Q: I came out an agnostic, but in a way I couldn't stand Greek politics. I just had four years there. The Greeks are nice individually but they're kind of whiny... The small power game that they play, "Nobody understands us" and that sort of thing gets a little long.

GELBER: Subsequently when I was at SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe], and before, when I was in London with the Navy, the Greeks would want us to draw the cultural frontier between Europe and the Islamic East along the flight information zone boundary that runs between the Greek islands and the Turkish coast – and that this is the boundary of Western civilization, which the rest of us have to die for – whereas we tend to see an important role for Turkey. During my negotiations on the Turkish agreement, the key issue was not to allow Athens to control what America does for Ankara.

The Turks had very, very serious economic problems. Many key items were missing from the market. Aspirin and coffee, for example, could not be found. Their approach was rigid state control. I remember having lunch during this stint with a Turkish official who complained that the Greeks were stealing their fish. I said, "What do you propose to do about it?" "We're going to buy some gunboats." I said, "How about some fishing

boats?” “Oh, no, no. Gunboats.” To stop the Greeks from stealing their fish.

On the other hand, if you had a Turk that was a friend, you had gold. [Several] of my first experiences as a vice consul in Istanbul [involved] some fatality cases. The first was an Armenian who had come back to Turkey in 1959 after 40-plus years of absence; he got off the plane, kissed the ground, and died. So we had his estate to look after. That was relatively easy compared to the next one, where a young American couple, driving down from Europe across Bulgaria into Turkey, rammed the back of a truck that had been parked on the highway with no lights in the dead of night. They didn't see it and ran right into it. They were both in the military hospital at Corlu, a hospital that had been built by the allies during the war to look after pilots who might be making the Romanian run and not able to get back to their bases in Italy. We had to deal with this. It was tough because the Turks felt that the husband had been driving with reckless speed. Fine. The father of the boy came out and was there when he died.

We had an American who was arrested for dealing in black market currency. This was a time when they arrested Americans for dealing... There was one case involving four sergeants in Izmir who were trafficking in black market currency, a scandal that cost several Air Force officers their careers because it was evident that the community was getting its Turkish lira requirements illegally, because nobody was buying from the paymaster, nobody except the consular employees who were buying from their finance officer. But this American was arrested in Istanbul and taken to prison and sentenced to 5 months and 23 days. I was told that as the vice consul I had to go visit him in jail. So the appointment was made, and I went with the senior consular assistant to the Istanbul jail to call upon the governor and to meet with our citizen. When we got to the gate of the prison, a Turkish soldier with a machine gun looked at us and said, “No.” The consular employee was Abdu Rahman Nikarovich. Abdu Rahmanbey was the son of the last major domo to the last sultan and was not an individual to be trifled with. He was a perfect example of the extraordinary local employees that we have had over the years. Abdu Rahmanbey said to me, “Just stand close. When I move, you move.” The door of the prison opened and he walked into it. I was in his wake. The guard reached up and grabbed Abdu Rahmanbey, and Abdu Rahmanbey said something to him, which he could never understand in a million years because it was pure Persian, but hearing it, the guard knew he had touched somebody he ain't supposed to touch. He pulled back, suddenly realizing that he had interfered with someone who should not be interfered with. We immediately were shown to the office of the governor, who begged forgiveness that his esteemed guest, Abdu Rahmanbey (not me), had been treated most discourteously. Could he ever forgive? Would he not report this to the wali? We got our citizen his razor blades and toilet paper. Here you had working for the U.S. consulate an individual who by his language and diction made clear his status. He would negotiate the leases for consular colleagues, and people were so happy to have a friend of Abdu Rahmanbey renting their property that they would be accommodating in the terms of the lease. He spoke Osmanlica, which was Persian and Arabic. And he wrote in the old script. Whenever we needed something, he would write a letter to the wali and everybody would... Of course, he would write it in the new script. It would be illegal to write it in the old script. He'd write it in the new script and the letter would get to people and they'd look at it and sort

of shrug and it would go up the chain and arrive on the wali's desk, and he would call up immediately and say, "Abdu Rahmanbey, I have your communication. How can I help you? Abdu Rahmanbey, it's a pleasure. It's a treat. It's an honor to be of assistance to a man of your culture." My wife speaks that dialect, that language also.

Q: You met your wife there?

GELBER: Yes.

Q: How did you meet her?

GELBER: I was assigned to Istanbul and I arrived in this most photographic of all cities without a camera, could not buy one from the local PX because I was temporary duty and these were controlled items. I had one sent up from the PX in Athens. On the day it arrived, I loaded my pockets with film and walked all over Istanbul, arriving at about three o'clock after seven hours of walking and filming at the Hilton Hotel and fell into a chair, ordered tea and a sandwich, and in walked Sarah, who is in the uniform of El Al Israel Airlines. She was a ground stewardess. She had a delayed flight and she had all these people. So she was chatting to them and I was watching this woman going around speaking German and French and English and Italian and Spanish and Turkish and Hebrew. Who is she? So, I suggested that I was interested and by the time I thawed, she had gone. A few weeks later, having as an airline employee a ticket to the United States for a training program, she applied for a visa. I saw her in the waiting room and I said, "Come." So her visa has my name assigned to it. She got her visa. I went back to Athens. Several months later she took advantage of the ticket and went to the United States. She knew Sam Berger's secretary, so she stayed with Mary Alice McLellan. She stayed with my parents in the States. My orders were changed. I was not due out of Athens until August. Then my orders were changed to send me home in May to begin language training in August. I asked Sarah to stay and we were married in December. That's another story about the whole problem of marrying a non-citizen at that time.

Q: Let's stick to Istanbul. Who was the consul general?

GELBER: Bob Miner. He was the consul general under whom I... Dave Cuthell was the deputy principal officer. Miner had been a teacher at Roberts College and knew Turkish, knew Turkey. His wife was, like Sarah, born in Istanbul. He ran a very easy shop. When this Armenian died, "Hey, look, I just got here. We've got a dead American citizen." Bob looked at me and said, "Well, can't do much. Get pissed off." I did not think that was particularly helpful counsel. What the hell is that going to do for me? He said, "That's the only thing you can do." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "He's the Bulgarian undertaker." Pistoff is the local undertaker. I told that joke once to a Turkish press attaché and he said, "Oh, yes, my uncle!" One of the problems in Turkey – and it was a problem in 1958 and '59 and 1978/1980 when I was negotiating the treaty agreement – is that you have a wiring diagram that's one box deep and then goes back to an assortment of commands and headquarters in Europe and the United States and who's in charge? All of these people insisted on their right to attend Bob Miner's staff meetings.

Q: We're talking about the Americans?

GELBER: Yes.

Q: And the very complicated military issue of who reports to whom.

GELBER: What you had in Istanbul at that time was assistant Army, Navy, and Air Force attachés, all of them Bulgarian language officers watching what Bulgaria was up to. Later on, the Turks insisted that all the attachés live in Ankara. At that point, you still had people who could be accredited diplomats living and working in Istanbul with an Istanbul-based mission. You had the Coast Guard from the Loran station, a satellite navigational system. You had the officers who ran the facility at Corlu, which was a missile, atomic storage depot. So you had a U.S. Army presence at Corlu who were the custodians for the Honest John warheads. You then had Air Force people from an Air Force base on the mainland who also had a similar role because they were custodians for airborne munitions, bombs. You had the Navy people at Karamursel who were running a listening station. You had other Navy people counting the Soviet ships going through the Bosphorus. You had an APO and you had a commissary. You had all these activities, all of whom were under the authority of someone stationed in Baltimore or Fort Mead or Arlington Hall or wherever, but no one was responsible to anyone else in country. They all would come to Bob Miner's staff meetings because they enjoyed them so much. If they had been dull and dreary affairs, they would look to someone and say, "You be the duty auditor." But they all wanted to come and hear Bob, who had a very droll sense of humor, to view what was happening in Turkey at that point in time. This was the winding down of the Menderes period, where shortly after I left Menderes was overthrown by the military and there were various actions and reactions which reflected the winding down of the Menderes regime.

There were four senior local employees who are legends. One was Abdu Rahmanbey. Another one was Dominik Karakolo, who was Greek. The international language in Istanbul was French. The French consul general would observe that he had no one on his staff who could compose French correspondence with the elegance and the finesse of Dominik. Betty Carp was recruited in 1914. She was Austrian, spoke terrible Turkish, had worked for OSS [Office of Strategic Services] with Allen Dulles, had over 50 years' service when I came on board through a variety of combinations of hardship duties. But they couldn't retire her. There would be no point. I said, "They can't retire you, Betty. The government can't afford your pension." It's about 103 percent of base pay. Ollie Norbay had left the service of the consulate and become the lawyer of the Hilton, so if you needed his help he was available. These were extraordinary individuals. It was quite an experience. I was there for three months.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point? We'll pick it up the next time. You went off to Urdu language training. Why don't we pick it up there?

[Note: next interview session appears not to have been recorded.]

Q: You were out of the War College in '72. Where did you go?

GELBER: I had been pursued by the Commerce Department very much. They had wanted me over there to do policy planning and trade promotion. I went. I was there in the building on 14th Street until '74, and then I came back to State and was the chief of the Business Division in the State Department. Which was bringing American companies in for seminars at State, which I think was useful. Then I went in '75 to a place which was new. That was Nigeria.

Q: Let's talk about the Washington side first. How did you find the Department of Commerce worked?

GELBER: One problem I found then was that if you are two blocks away from State, you might as well be a thousand miles. You're somebody beyond the horizon. I didn't realize that until I was there. I had a lot of freedom to do what I wanted to. Again, many kind people but a very Civil Service mentality. It was much more bureaucratic. Much more focused on whose chair went where and how many square feet in a room and so much administrative effort went into it. Constantly redesigning office space and making charts of who would report to whom. And who answered this phone. It was pretty disappointing.

Q: Then over in State you were in the Economic Bureau?

End of interview